

NSC BRIEFING

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21 May 1958

LEBANON AND JORDAN

Lebanon

I. Security situation:

- A. Beirut appears quiet except for occasional bombings to keep shops closed, thus lend appearance to "general strike."
 - 1. There have been threats in last few days to turn violence against Americans - this sort of thing absent since attacks on USIS 12 days ago.
- B. Tripoli ~~Army attempting mopping up operations.~~ *There is a stalemate.*
- C. Hayt ad-Din Govt forces retreating from Druze led by Kamil Jumblatt, and ~~ex-Syrian staff chief Shagaya.~~
- D. Elsewhere Border with Syria open - infiltrators and arms flowing freely.
 - 1. Government may again lose control northeastern region as result new larger-scale Syrian efforts there on 19 May.
 - 2. *Baalbek captured by opposition tribesmen on 21 May.*

II. Political situation:

- A. Lines hardening between opposition--especially Moslem leaders *Saeb and Raschid Karame* Yafi and *Saib Salameh* and government.
 - 1. Moderate "Third Force," chief leaders being Edde brothers *who also have presidential bag,* and Henri Pharaon, attempted to bring about compromise including Shihab as prime minister and Chamoun finishing out term, but not seeking reelection.
- B. ~~Chamoun has refused compromise but~~ *Chamoun* pressure on him is increasing

III. Outside intervention:

- A. UAR infiltrators and arms from Syria freely cross border.

2. Pleas to Cairo from Damascus for additional arms continue.

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5. Lebanese still undecided on taking case to UN Security Council, *but has appealed to Arab League.* They have expelled over 2,800 Syrians, many of them casual laborers from the country. Another 1,200 have have left "voluntarily." *(over Damascus ref.)*

IV. Soviet position: *6. Late development - Syrian Druze leader Atrash has appealed to Lebanese Druze to join opposition. This is part of notably stepped-up UAR propaganda within past 24 hours.*

A. USSR maintains Lebanon another case US interference.

1. Soviet position has hardened in direct relation to revelation of US plans to act at Lebanon's request.
2. However, Soviet threats still relatively weak.

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B. Improbable that Moscow will act militarily.

1. Politically Moscow inhibited because Chamoun and cabinet are legal government.
2. There is no "wronged party" on Soviet side to bring its case to the UN.
3. Moscow may be limited to irrelevant blast against US. *(a) Radio Moscow devoting greatest attention to Lebanon ever.*
4. Moscow risks exposing itself to charge of interference in Lebanese affairs should it act on behalf of UAR.
5. Nonetheless, Moscow will benefit either way on intervention.
 - (a) If intervention - then full exploitation of presence of western troops.
 - (b) If no intervention - Moscow can claim its threats were deterrent against western aggression.

V. Key to continuing trouble is held by UAR.

A. Chamoun and security forces could control situation if left alone, but Nasir can prolong violence indefinitely by keeping up supplies of arms and infiltrators.

Jordan

VI. Amman authorities appear to be alert to new UAR-supported instability in Jordan.

VII. Meanwhile, Iraqi-Jordanian Arab Union cabinet formed on 17 May appears to reflect disinclination of both nations to develop effective union government.

A. Jordanian strongman Samir Rifai was not placed in union cabinet, allegedly because of Jordan's dissatisfaction with Iraq's coolness toward Union and because he needed in Amman for upcoming security problem.

B. This development will reduce ability of pro-Western Arab states to develop effective basis for withstanding Nasir's bid for domination of Arab world.

VIII. Sudanese leaders ~~also~~ fear that if Nasir ~~succeeds in~~ wins in Lebanon, ~~the~~ Sudan will be next on his list.

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